



Senator Daines

Re: bill S2206

To Whom it may concern:

Backcountry Sled Patriots (BSP) supports Sen. Daines bill S2206 to repeal certain Wilderness Study Areas (WSA) established under the 1977 Montana Wilderness Study Act. (MWSA)

BSP is a **1,800** member organization of snowmobilers based in Missoula, Mt.. It's core mission is working to keep back country (off trail) snowmobile areas open.

The WSA's included in bill S2206 have been "studied" for 40 years to determine if they qualify for inclusion into the National Wilderness System. The original act passed by Congress allowed for uses to continue that existed in 1977. Over the years the Forest Service has "enhanced" the wilderness character by eliminating motorized access and managing these areas as designated Wilderness through Forest Planning Revisions. This has created a **de facto wilderness** designation for most of the WSA's.

Notwithstanding the fact that the Forest Service recommended to Congress in a time frame from 1982 to 1985 that these areas should **NOT BE MANAGED AS WILDERNESS**, political interference has reversed these recommendations to re-direct the Forest Service to "enhance" the wilderness character of these areas in order to eliminate multiple use in favor of one user group.

BSP recognizes that there are some primitive values in the WSA's included in bill S2206, however that does not preclude them from multiple recreational uses that existed in 1977....**as intended by Congress.**

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stan Spencer', written over a horizontal line.

Stan Spencer

President,

Backcountry Sled Patriots.

PETITION TO SUPPORT SEN. DAINES. "PROTECT PUBLIC USE OF PUBLIC LANDS ACT"

This bill would release BACK TO THE PUBLIC, approximately 500,000 acres of land in several Wilderness Study Areas (WSA) in Montana. The 1977 Montana Wilderness Study Act (MWSA) created (9) Wilderness Study Areas encompassing 972,000 acres to determine if they were suitable for inclusion into the National Wilderness System. The Act directed the Secretary of Agriculture to report its findings to Congress within (5) years. The Forest Service did an assessment and recommended that many of the WSA's or portions thereof were unsuitable for Wilderness and should be managed as NON-WILDERNESS. Congress has not acted on those recommendations...yet.

In the late 1980's the Forest service then started managing many of these areas as DE FACTO WILDERNESS, prohibiting many of the previous approved uses, including all motorized and bicycle access.

Sen Daines' bill is basically taking the long delayed decision process to Congress as intended by the MWSA. MOST MONTANAS FEEL THAT 40 YEARS IS FAR TOO LONG TO "STUDY" ANYTHING.

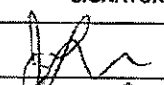

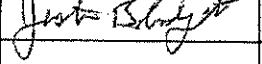
PUBLIC LAND SHOULD BE AVAILABLE TO ALL THE PUBLIC, NOT JUST SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS.

I SUPPORT SEN. DAINES' "PROTECT PUBLIC USE OF PUBLIC LANDS" bill S. 2206

Al's Cycle

	PRINT NAME	SIGNATURE	STREET ADDRESS	CITY	STATE	ZIP
1	Dan Thompson	D. Thompson	219 Totem View	Victor	MT	59825
2	Karen Thompson	Karen Thompson	219 Totem View	Victor	MT	59875
3	RIAN ENGLUND	RIAN ENGLUND	619 W Hwy 93 N	HAMILTON	MT	59840
4	Don Farnsworth	Don Farnsworth	438 Rippling Woods	Victor	MT	59825
5	Bryan Jones	Bryan Jones	95 Grand Vista Lane	Hamilton	MT	59840
6	Justin Balch	Justin Balch	925 West Pond Apt A	Hamilton	MT	59840
7	MARY ENGLUND	Mary Englund	1661 STEIGERWALT	CORVALLIS	MT	59828
8	Bill Sparling	Bill Sparling	1661 Sutherland	CORVALLIS	MT	59828
9	CURT BATES	Curt Bates	339 Bull Run	FLORENCE	MT	59833
10	Vincent Roth	Vincent Roth	2598 Little Sleeping Child	Hamilton	MT	59840
11	Bruce Fosha	Bruce Fosha	467 Gird Creek Rd.	Hamilton	MT	59840
12	Breann Davis	Breann Davis	21351 Poetic Ct.	Florence	MT	59833
13	Lucas Anson	Lucas Anson	581 Skalkaho	Hamilton	MT	59840
14	Russ Englund	Russ Englund	619 Hwy 93 N	HAMILTON	MT	59840
15	LAMAR	STEIGERWALT	570 Coko Court	CORVALLIS	MT	59828
16	Carole	Steigerwalt	570 Coko Court	Corvallis	MT	59828
17	Steve Abner	Steve Abner	5215 Kocik Ln	Florence	MT	59833
18	Daniel Brashers	Daniel Brashers	2117 35th Ave	Missoula	MT	59804
19	Ray Waliser	Ray Waliser	686 Foley Ln.	HAMILTON	MT	59840
20	Chris Fillingham	Chris Fillingham	2112 Bearbya Rd	Hamilton	MT	59840

	PRINT NAME	SIGNATURE	STREET ADDRESS	CITY	STATE	ZIP
21	Kim England	[Signature]	619 Hwy 93 N.	Hamilton	MT	59840
22	Dave Hill	DAVE HILLS	249 MARTIN RD	CORVALLIS	MT	59828
23	Racci Brown	Racci Brown	P.O. Box 25	Parby	MT	59829
24	Eric Shreels	[Signature]	236 St. Joseph Ln	Stevensville	MT	59870
25	PHIL WINDER	[Signature]	109 ALMA LN	VICTOR	MT	59875
26	Tyler Jones	[Signature]	518 South 1 st	Hamilton	MT	59840
27	Lynn Hoffaker	[Signature]	2486 Moose Butte Ln	Parby	MT	59829
28	Alfred Lutzner	[Signature]	246 GROSS BUTTE LN	DIANDY	MT	59829
29	Thomas Raymond	[Signature]	544 Highway Ln	Corvallis	MT	59828
30	Jacalle Owens	[Signature]	1395 Brown Trail	Corvallis	MT	59828
31	JANET PRUITT	[Signature]	657 Sweeney Creek Loop	Florence	MT	59833
32	Charles Owsen	[Signature]	2112 Bernly Rd	Hamilton	MT	59840
33	Steve Moskauer	[Signature]	505 Ashton Rd	Corvallis	MT	59828
34	DENNIS WESSLES	[Signature]	2055 DESPERADO TRL	CORVALLIS	MT	59828
35	DUNN BOBOWICZ	[Signature]	11000 Highway 12W	Lolo	MT	59847
36	Scott Burlington	[Signature]	255 Cooper Loop	Hamilton	MT	59840
37	Brian Henault	[Signature]	485 W. Mission Ave	Parby	MT	59829
38	Heidi Sanderson	[Signature]	655 Shepherds View	Corvallis	MT	59828
39	Corinne Sanderson	[Signature]	655 Shepherds View	Corvallis	MT	59828
40	KART LOVE	[Signature]	209 PLEASANT DR.	Hamilton	MT	59840
41	Bridget Walczyski	[Signature]	997 Joy St	Corvallis	MT	59828
42	BRENT NELSON	[Signature]	345 RYE CR RD	PARBY	MT	59829
43	BILLIE NELSON	[Signature]	345 RYE CR RD	Parby	MT	59829
44	Shawn Kim	[Signature]	70 Angel Ln	Hamilton	MT	59840
45	ZANE WATTS	[Signature]	97 TETAL	HAMILTON	MT	59840
46	TODD FEARP	[Signature]	1851 SUTHERLAND LN	CORVALLIS	MT	59828
47	Scott Evers	[Signature]	808 Ponderosa	Hamilton	MT	59840
48	BRIAN BOWEN	[Signature]	424 ORLE LN	CORVALLIS	MT	59828
49	Herman Hill	[Signature]	1054 Carolyn Ln	Corvallis	MT	59828
50	GARY KOSKIE	[Signature]	333 BERN COOK RD	VICTOR	MT	59875
51	GEOFF WISE	[Signature]	1721 Mt. View ORCHARD DR	CORVALLIS	MT	59828
52	Maggi Liechty	[Signature]	1003 S. East St	Corvallis	MT	59828

	PRINT NAME	SIGNATURE	STREET ADDRESS	CITY	STATE	ZIP
53	Jason Liechty		1003 S. East St	Canaville	MT	59828
54	Isaiah Nelson		4527 Grizzly Way	Steenerville	MT	59870
55	Justin Blazette		1241 Monahan St	Missoula	MT	59801
56						
57						
58						
59						
60						
61						
62						
63						
64						
65						
66						
67						
68						
69						
70						
71						
72						
73						
74						
75						
76						
77						
78						
79						
80						
81						
82						
83						
84						

87	Jan King	Jan King	P.O. Box 2097	Hamilton	MT	59840
88	Donna	Donna Tanbridge	Box 69	Darby	MT	59829
89	Janie Imbrey	Janie Imbrey	543 Treace Gulch Rd	Stevensville	MT	59870
90	Tisa Imbrey	Tisa Imbrey	543 Treace Gulch Rd	Stevensville	MT	59870
91	Bryan McCluskey	Bryan McCluskey	359 Rye Way	Corvallis	MT	59828
92						
93						
94						
95						
96						
97						
98						
99						
100						
101						
102						
103						
104						
105						
106						
107						
108						
109						
110						
111						
112						
113						
114						
115						
116						



Beaverhead County Commissioners

2 South Pacific St., Ste. #4

Dillon, MT 59725-4000

Phone: (406)683-3750 Fax: (406)683-3772

trice@beaverheadcounty.org

mmcginlev@beaverheadcounty.org

jjackson@beaverheadcounty.org

September 8, 2017

Senator Steve Daines
320 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Daines,

Beaverhead County strongly supports legislation to finally deal with WSA's (wilderness study areas). Beaverhead County for years has been asking Congress and the federal agencies to address this critical land use issue. All of the WSAs in Beaverhead County have been studied by the BLM and Forest Service and we agree with and support their recommendations which are mentioned in this letter. The following part of this letter is nearly identical to the one we sent to our Congressional leaders in 2011. It is amazing how these issues are still important now, six years later.

In a call for public lands that have **STRONG LOCAL** support for permanent protection as wilderness under the Wilderness Act we argue that there are **NO** such areas in Beaverhead County. Agricultural interests, timber interests, mineral development interests, power transmission interests, communication interest, summer and winter motorized recreationists whom populate our County, as well as a small core of wilderness advocates agree with the BLM and Forest Service recommendations discussed in this letter. Thus, there are no areas that are not fully contested when

proposals are forwarded to remove lands from multiple-use management and add them to the acres managed as wilderness.

When reviewing lands within Beaverhead County being considered for future wilderness designation, of paramount importance to our residents, are the Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) that have undergone analysis by the BLM and Forest Service with the analysis resulting in a finding of “Not Recommended for Wilderness.” These areas are still Wilderness Study Areas not because they have outstanding wilderness characteristics, but because Congress has not acted and removed the WSA designation it imposed by legislation going on 30-40 years ago. Beaverhead County Commissioners would stridently advocate any future legislation from Congress dealing with or designating WSAs to recognize the areas listed below as “Not Recommended for Wilderness” by the BLM. Management prescriptions for these areas should be developed to address multiple uses including motorized recreation, grazing, timber, minerals, transmission lines, communication towers, as well as ecological services.

These areas are:

- | | |
|---|---------------|
| • Blacktail Mountains (south section) consisting of | 6,893 acres |
| • East Fork of the Blacktail Deer Creek consisting of | 6,230 acres |
| • Hidden Pasture Creek consisting of | 15,509 acres |
| • Bell and Limekiln Canyons consisting of | 9,650 acres |
| • Henneberry Ridge consisting of | 9,806 acres |
| • Farlin Creek (west section) consisting of | 529 acres |
| • Centennial Mountains consisting of | 22,047 acres |
| • West Pioneer Mountains consisting of | 148,150 acres |

As for the three areas listed below that have been “Recommended for Wilderness,” Beaverhead County Commissioners do not recognize any outstanding needs for representative ecological communities in the wilderness lands inventory that these areas would fill that are not currently well represented by lands already protected by wilderness designation. Our understanding of the wilderness lands inventory directive is one where simply adding acres or quantity is not an

analysis/decision criterion. Farlin Creek does not meet the 4,000 acre minimum size and as such should not be considered. Given the recommended wilderness and wilderness designations on neighboring/adjoining Forest Service managed lands, these areas appear to be Recommended Wilderness not due to outstanding wilderness character, but due to their locale and potential for creating large blocks of wilderness.

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------|
| • Blacktail Mountains consisting of | 10,586 acres |
| • Farlin Creek | 610 acres |
| • Centennial Mountains | 23,054 acres |

Beaverhead County Commissioners believe these areas would best be managed as National Protection Areas as a means to preserve their wilderness characteristics and yet allow for utilitarian use of resources vital to Beaverhead County's and the nation's residents.

As the budget problems persist in D.C., Beaverhead County Commissioners would like to stress the importance of federal revenue sharing that comes from the non-preservationist management of federal lands. Economic potential of responsible, use-oriented resource utilization on public lands would greatly benefit our nation beginning with our local economy, extending to the many visitors who travel to Beaverhead County to recreate on these lands and hopefully federal agencies' budgets from permits, income, and fees.

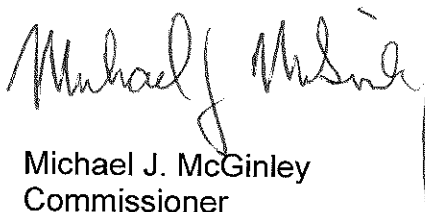
In conclusion, the Beaverhead County Commissioners believe that the over 10 million acres of wilderness and national parks within one day's drive of Dillon are ample in meeting ecological, environmental, and human needs for wilderness in this region. We therefore urge the agencies to forego an agenda of adding acres to wilderness for the sake of adding acres to wilderness. As well as to manage remaining non-wilderness federal lands to allow the greatest degree of access to the widest spectrum of users, to provide the highest level of utilitarian-compatible multiple-uses, and to employ our knowledge of revenue generating methods for the benefit of Beaverhead County Citizens,

the visitors who come to see this northern Rocky Mountain landscape, and all of the people of the United States.

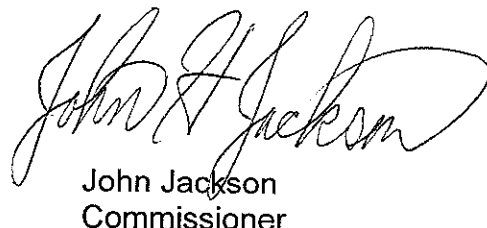
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "C. Thomas Rice".

C. Thomas Rice
Chairman

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Michael J. McGinley".

Michael J. McGinley
Commissioner

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John Jackson".

John Jackson
Commissioner

Bitterroot Backcountry Cyclists

923 Sleeping Child Rd

Hamilton , MT 59840

406 -381-4483

savemontanatrails@bitterrootbackcountrycyclists.org

February 2, 2018

Senator Steve Daines

4321 First Street

Washington D.C.

Senator Daines,

Outdoor recreation is essential to the Montana lifestyle and the reason many of live here in the Bitterroot. Governor Bullock just proposed Office of Outdoor Recreation recognizing not only how critical outdoor recreation is our Montana lifestyle, but also our economy. Mountain Biking and outdoor recreation in our state generates \$5.8 billion in consumer spending, \$1.5 billion in wages and salaries, 64,000 direct jobs, and \$403 million in state and local tax revenue annually. Outdoor recreation is the future of conservation. Those of who play outside have a vested interest in protecting the landscape in a sustainable manner. That is why the 50 plus members the Bitterroot Backcountry Cyclists (BBC) volunteer nearly 700 hours clearing and maintaining nearly 100 miles of trail annually.

Until two years ago many of the trails we maintained under an agreement with the Bitterroot National Forest were in the Sapphire and Blue Joint Wilderness Study Areas. Unfortunately two years the Bitterroot Travel Plan closed over 100 miles of trail in these areas to bicycles despite decades of quiet low impact use. As mandated by the Montana Wilderness Study Act of 1977, these areas were evaluated by the Forest Service and the Sapphire WSA did receive a recommendation for wilderness designation, and only the half of Blue Joint WSA north of Razorback mountain received a wilderness recommendation.

With the Forest Service now managing the lands as de-facto wilderness contrary to their own recommendations, the absurdity of “studying” these areas for close to 40 years is clear. The BBC supports Senator Daines bill (S.

2206) to release those WSAs, such as Sapphire and Blue Joint, that did not receive wilderness recommendation and have local support for this action. We understand that these areas will still be protected as Inventoried Roadless Areas which will restrict additional road building and logging. Having ridden and explored these areas we believe this will balance recreational access with preservation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lance Pysher". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Lance" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Pysher".

Lance Pysher, President Bitterroot Backcountry Cyclists



PO Box 265, Hamilton, Montana 59840
www.ridgerunners.org

September 12, 2016

Senator Jon Tester
Senator Steve Daines
Representative Ryan Zinke

The Bitterroot Ridgerunners Snowmobile Club (BRR) is a group of about 350 citizens in Ravalli County who advocate for safe and enjoyable winter sports activities. With support from Montana FWP, BRR grooms about 80 miles of multi-use winter trails in the Bitterroot and Beaverhead-Deerlodge Forests. Many of our members also enjoy snowmobiling, hunting and fishing in the Helena-Lewis & Clark National Forest.

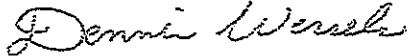
The purpose of this letter is to fully endorse the recommendation of the Russell County Sportsmen's Association to release certain WSAs in the Helena-Lewis & Clark National Forest for multiple use. These areas do not possess adequate characteristics to be designated by Congress as wilderness areas, but the H-L&C Forest Planning process is likely to manage them as wilderness anyway. BRR agrees with the Russell County Sportsmen's Association's position that the best way to deal with this egregious abuse of authority is through prompt and decisive legislative action.

Unfortunately, the H-L&C Forest WSAs are not the only example of undue influence exerted on the Forest Service by wealthy and frequently litigious out-of-state environmental groups. In the Bitterroot National Forest, the recently-released Travel Plan will create over 200,000 acres of defacto wilderness, much of which are WSAs or portions of WSAs that have repeatedly been determined to be unsuitable for wilderness designation. In the Bitterroot NF, the Sapphire WSA is 117,000 acres along the Sapphire divide. In their 1985 evaluation of the Sapphire WSA, the Bitterroot and B-D National Forests found that the entire WSA lacked sufficient wilderness characteristics to be designated as Wilderness. In spite of these professional and thorough evaluations, the BNF Travel Plan will ban all motorized and mechanized (mountain bike) travel in the Sapphire WSA. Also in the BNF, the Blue Joint WSA is 65,860 acres, a small portion of which lies in the Salmon-Challis National Forest. The joint 1985 report by the BNF and S-C Forests determined that only about half of the Blue Joint WSA was suitable for possible wilderness designation. The BNF Travel Plan will also ban all motorized and mechanized access to the entire Blue Joint WSA.

For snowmobilers and snowmobile-assisted backcountry skiers, the closure of the Sapphire WSA is devastating. The portions of the Sapphire divide that can actually be approached by snowmobiles offers the best experience in the entire Forest. Without snowmobile assist, backcountry skiers and snowshoers will also be excluded from this remarkable alpine experience.

In 1776 the fledgling American colonies went to war with the most powerful nation on earth because distant Great Britain imposed unreasonable, misinformed and arbitrary taxes and restrictions on the colonists. The challenges we face with regard to how public lands in the West are managed are the result of distant, uncaring bureaucrats in Washington D.C. yielding to the influence of powerful "environmental" foundations. Congress created this WSA mess by failing to act in 1988. Now we challenge our current Congressional delegation to fix it!!

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dennis Wessels".

Dennis Wessels, President
Bitterroot Ridgerunners Snowmobile Club

CC Russell County Sportsmen's Association

CAPITAL TRAIL VEHICLE ASSOCIATION (CTVA)

**P.O. Box 5295
Helena, MT 59604-5295**

February 18, 2017

Senator Steve Daines
104 4th Street North, Suite 302
Great Falls, MT 59401

Re: Please rescind Montana Wilderness Study Act of 1977

Dear Senator Daines,

We enjoy riding our OHVs on primitive trails and roads in the Lewis and Clark National Forest. All multiple-use land managed by the Forest Service provides a significant source of these OHV recreational opportunities. We have observed that 97% of the visitors to our public lands are there to enjoy motorized access and motorized recreational opportunities. We are passionate about OHV recreation for the following reasons:

Enjoyment and Rewards of OHV Recreation

- Opportunity for a recreational experience for all types of people.
- Opportunity to strengthen family relationships.
- Opportunity to experience and respect the natural environment.
- Opportunity to participate in a healthy and enjoyable sport.
- Opportunity to experience a variety of opportunities and challenges.
- Camaraderie and exchange of experiences.
- We like to build and maintain trails for all users.
- For the adventure of it.

We want to bring a problem to your attention that is important to many outdoor recreationists. The problem involves two areas in the Lewis and Clark National Forest, Middle Fork of the Judith and the Big Snowies. These two areas are being held from the public by the Montana Wilderness Study Act of 1977 (MWSA 1977). The Middle Fork of the Judith in the Little Belts and the Big Snowies were designated wilderness study areas by a congressional act way back in the 1970's. The act clearly stated these areas were to be evaluated and designated as wilderness or returned to multiple-use (<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/95/s393/text>). The law did not intend for these areas to remain in limbo for 40 years because of inaction but unfortunately that is what has happened.

The Lewis and Clark National Forest is one of the most popular areas for outdoor recreation in Montana. Two of the most popular and scenic areas within the forest is the Middle Fork of the Judith River and the Big Snowies south of Lewistown. Unfortunately, multiple use of both areas by the public has been severely restricted by the MWSA 1977. The Act has been a critical factor in the

We are a locally supported association whose purpose is to preserve trails for all recreationists through responsible environmental protection and education.

Forest Service's inability to develop a reasonable forest plan for the area. Rescinding the MWSA 1977 designation would open the area for enjoyment by all of the public and allow the Forest Service to better manage the forest in these two areas.

The Forest Service has repeatedly stated these two areas should not be designated as wilderness and have recommended they be managed as non-wilderness lands as demonstrated by the following summary of land management actions:

- 1960- the Multiple Use-Sustained Yield Act directs our forests to be managed for multiple use
- 1972- RARE I Study- Middle Fork scores were not sufficient for wilderness designation
- Montana Wilderness Study Act (MWSA of 1977)- designated areas in Middle Fork of the Judith River (92,000 acres) and the Big Snowies (98,000 acres) as study areas.
 - June 1977 to January 1979, the FS RARE II study (1970's) recommended further study before a final wilderness recommendation could be made
 - In 1982, the FS completed the MWSA analysis and their Final Environmental Statement (FES) did not recommend the Middle Fork as a candidate for wilderness designation
- In 1986, the Forest Service the Forest Plan Record of Decision for the Lewis and Clark National Forest recommended "non-wilderness for both areas"
- In 2003, the Forest Service published the 'Judith Restoration Environmental Impact Statement' and did not recommend the Middle Fork of Judith for further study
- Motorized recreationists was asked to support the Rocky Mountain Heritage Act since the Act released wilderness study areas (WSA) designation in other areas of the Front
 - Motorized recreationists asked that removal of the WSA designation be included as part of the legislation
 - Our request was addressed by Senator Baucus's office
- In Montana, the wilderness experience already exists in many other places including:
 - 16 USFS Wilderness areas (3,606,715 acres)
 - 2 National Parks (3,233,113 acres),
 - 39 BLM managed lands (449,963 acres),
 - National Monuments,
 - National Wildlife Refuges, and
 - Conservation Management Areas
- These two areas have been "studied" since 1972 – over 44 years
 - Declaring these two areas as WSA's has restricted public use which was not supposed to happen per the original legislation unless they were officially designated as wilderness areas
 - Continued management as WSA's allows very limited management of the forest

We are a locally supported association whose purpose is to preserve trails for all recreationists through responsible environmental protection and education.

- Removing this designation would facilitate Forest Service management of these areas and the forest surrounding them and allow the public much needed access and multiple-use opportunities

Congressional action on the MWSA of 1977 is the only way that this situation can be fixed. We are asking you to help remove the Wilderness Study Area classification from the Middle Fork of the Judith River and the Big Snowies and also direct the Forest Service to manage these areas as non-wilderness multiple-use areas as originally designated by congress in the Multiple-Use Act of 1960. We ask for your support to rescind the Montana Wilderness Study Act of 1977 and return the Middle Fork of the Judith and the Big Snowies to multiple-use management for the benefit of all of the public.

Thank you for considering our request.

Sincerely,

/s/ CTVA Action Committee on behalf of our 240 members and their families and friends

Capital Trail Vehicle Association (CTVA)¹
P.O. Box 5295
Helena, MT 59604-5295

Contacts:

Doug Abelin, President	at (406) 461-4818	dabelin@live.com
Jody Loomis, VP	at (406) 459-8114	jloomis@mt.net

¹ CTVA is also a member of Montana Trail Vehicle Riders Association (mtvra.com), Blue Ribbon Coalition (sharetrails.org), and New Mexico Off highway Vehicle Alliance (nmohva.org),. Individual memberships in the American Motorcycle Association (ama-cycle.org), Citizens for Balanced Use (citizensforbalanceduse.com), Families for Outdoor Recreation (ffor.org), Montana 4X4 Association, Inc. (m4x4a.org), Montana Multiple Use Association (montanamua.org), Snowmobile Alliance of Western States (snowmobile-alliance.org), and United Four Wheel Drive Association (ufwda.org)

Citizens for Balanced Use

Box 606, Gallatin Gateway, Mt 59730

www.balanceduse.org

1-406-600-4228

TO: Senator Jon Tester
Senator Steve Daines
Congressman Ryan Zinke

Citizens for Balanced Use (CBU) is a grass roots organization representing more than 100,000 Montana citizens through our membership and supporting businesses and organizations. We advocate for multiple use recreation, active forest management, and responsible resource development on federally managed public lands in the west.


CBU supports the release of the North Fork of the Judith River in the Little Belt Mountains and the Big Snowy Mountains from Wilderness Study Area designation. These areas were placed under wilderness study in 1977 and were only to remain for a brief period of time and until a formal recommendation were to occur. Wilderness evaluations by the Forest Service have shown these areas as NOT suitable for wilderness designation yet Congress has not formally released them. CBU believes it is time these areas be released.

The management of these areas under current WSA designation severely restricts the majority of users of our public lands. The elderly and physically challenged that require motorized and mechanized transport for access are virtually locked out of enjoying these lands. Families with young children and grandparents wanting to spend time together on these lands are also not afforded this opportunity because of the WSA designation.

Access to and on our public lands and waters are so very important to all of us here in Montana. Many of our lands, nearly 2/3 of our public lands in Montana, are restricted in some way or another to multiple use access. Wilderness advocates continue to pressure Congress for more and more wilderness designation and CBU believes we have enough wilderness in Montana. User surveys conducted by both the Beaverhead Deerlodge and the Gallatin National Forests show that less than 3% of the public recreate in and on wilderness designated public lands.

After nearly 40 years since these areas were placed into wilderness study area designation it is time for Congress to release them for the greatest good and enjoyment of the public. Thank you for your consideration of this very important issue.

Sincerely,



Kerry White
Executive Director
CBU

C'MON 4X4 CLUB
8519 Maiden Road
Lewistown MT 59457



February 12, 2017

Senator Steve Daines
104 4th Street North, Ste 302
Great Falls MT 59401

Honorable Senator Daines:

We are the C'MON 4x4 Club and are a small (15) family oriented organization located in central Montana. We are proud and active members of our community, benefitting local charities and clubs as we are able. We believe in using our local land resources in a responsible way by caring for the land as ours personally.

In our area, there are two Wilderness Study Areas that have been there for over 40 years. Because of their being Wilderness Study Areas, the Forest Service is limited in opening them up for multiple use. The Forest Service has never wanted these as wilderness, so we are asking that these areas be eliminated as Wilderness Study Areas. Removal would allow the Forest Service to manage these areas with the rest of the forest where multiple-use can be an option.

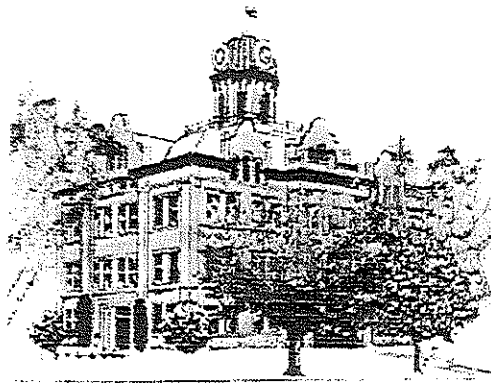
Many of our club activities take place on our public lands, and we cherish and respect those lands. As a club we support the efforts to keep the roads/trails open to recreational use, and obviously open to multiple use by the public.

Please introduce a bill that will remove the Wilderness Study Area designations from the Big Snowies Mountain and the Middle Fork of the Judith River in the Little Belt Mountains.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading 'Becky Shepard', is written over the typed name.

Becky Shepard, Secretary/Treasurer for
C'MON 4x4 Club, Lewistown MT



FERGUS COUNTY

Oct, 13 2016

Dear Senator Daines;

The Fergus County Commissioners are in support of the efforts to remove 98,000 acres from the Big Snowies Wilderness Study Area designation. We believe this area has languished under this designation long enough. It is time to allow the Forest service to integrate the management of these lands with the rest of the national forest lands.

The original intent of the WSA designation was to identify possible lands for a wilderness designation and study them to determine if they qualified. These lands have failed to qualify multiple times and need to be released for appropriate multiuse management strategies of our national forests. The continued WSA designation hinders responsible management of these public resources.

We appreciate the consideration afforded local government when making decisions that impact our community and our way of life. Please feel free to contact the Fergus County Commissioners with any questions or concerns you may have regarding our position on the removal of the WSA designation on these lands in Fergus County.

Sincerely,

Carl Seilstad

Sandra Youngbauer

Ross Butcher

Fergus County Commissioners
712 W. Main St., Suite 210
Lewistown, MT 59457

commissioners@co.fergus.mt.us

Ross Butcher, District 1
Sandy Youngbauer, District 2
Carl Seilstad, District 3

Office of
The Board of County Commissioners
Granite County

Post Office Box 925, Philipsburg, Montana 59858-0925
Telephone 406-859-7022 Assistant 406-859-7023 Fax 406-859-3817 Web Site www.co.granite.mt.us

Bill Slaughter, Chairperson
P O Box 96
Hall MT 59837

Barton C. Bonney, Commissioner
P O Box 701
Philipsburg MT 59858

Scott C. Adler, Commissioner
750 Frontage Road West
Drummond MT 59832

February 6, 2018

Re: Granite County, Montana; Letter of Support for Senate Bill 2206

Dear Honorable U.S. Senators Jon Tester and Steve Daines:

After hearing much public comment regarding the Sapphire Wilderness Study Area issues and associated issues from the residents of Granite county over the past few months, we strongly support Senator Daines' sponsored U.S. Senate Bill 2206 (SB 2206). We encourage all members of the U.S. Senate to support this bill as well. It is time to move forward and act for the people of Granite County.

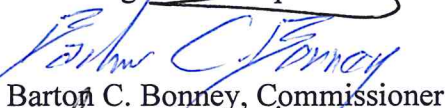
Additionally, we have established an advisory committee, to be made up of Granite County residents, which will provide ongoing advice to us as a County Commission regarding SB2206, any future amendments to this SB2206, and regarding forest management in general. We also understand that once SB2206 is passed as currently proposed, that we would, along with the residents of Granite County, would have considerable input in the forest management plan regarding the Sapphire area within Granite County.

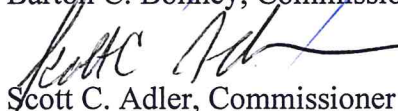
We appreciate your unyielding dedication and work on behalf of the people of Granite County and Montana. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Board of Granite County Commissioners


Bill Slaughter, Chairperson


Barton C. Bonney, Commissioner


Scott C. Adler, Commissioner



GREAT FALLS BICYCLE CLUB
220 WOODLAND ESTATES
GREAT FALLS, MONTANA 59404

The mission of the Great Falls Bicycle Club is to:

Provide safe, bicyclist-friendly routes for travel in and around Great Falls.

Sponsor recreational and competitive cycling activities.

Be a key player in transportation planning for Great Falls and vicinity.

Check us out on the world wide web at:

<http://www.greatfallsbicycleclub.org>

December 6, 2017

Senator Steve Daines
104 4th St N #302
Great Falls, MT 59401

Open Letter to Senator Steve Daines,

Members of the Great Falls Bicycle Club seek your influence to help temper the current USFS drive to create defacto Wilderness areas throughout Montana and specifically in the Big Snowy Mountains. USFS bureaucrats have usurped Congress's power to create Wilderness by inappropriately managing public land areas that they have selected as Recommended Wilderness Areas as if those lands had already been designated by Congress as federally protected Wilderness. USFS Region 1 guidelines (policies) effectively advocate for Wilderness and are therefore a gross overreach and abuse of the power we the people have entrusted to them.

The bureaucrats' Forest Planning efforts in the HLCNF seem designed to undo your commendable efforts to release the Wilderness Study Areas that Congress designated in 1977. The USFS would lock them up again in the current process as RWA's. In the HLCNF, the WSA in the Big Snowy Mountains has been targeted as a potential RWA in the current Forest Planning process. Bicyclists are very concerned about this alternative because the Snowys contain a [regionally famous](#) and well used mountain bike trail that would probably be closed to bicyclists if this area becomes an RWA so as to "maintain the area's Wilderness character".

At a recent local meeting, the HLCNF Forest Supervisor, Bill Avey, was asked if he intended to implement the USFS Region One "policy" to manage any new RWA's he creates in the HLCNF to preclude uses that may damage future Wilderness designation. He confirmed that this was his intention. That intention will ban bicycle riding in the Snowy Mountains and all trails in the RWA's unless Supervisor Avey chooses to allow our "non-conforming use" to continue as allowed in the 2012 Planning Rule. We fear he will kick us out, thus following in the footsteps of his predecessor, Spike Thompson, who kicked bicycles out of much of the Rocky Mountain Front in 2006 and was subsequently given a

Lifetime Achievement Award by the MWA and the Wilderness Society at his 2011 retirement party.

Further concern comes from the wording of the recent Public Comment Summary of the HLCNF Forest Plan Revision Scoping Document. Referring to bicyclist's comments as "Mechanized Use" is a typical Wilderness advocate's distortion of the intent of the Wilderness Act. The Act's original implementation language specifically prohibited "non-human powered vehicles", i.e. motorized vehicles. This implementation language was overturned in the early 1980's by powerful interest groups who selfishly strong armed the USFS to prohibit bicycles from Wilderness areas.

We believe that following this Region One guideline (policy) is inappropriate for several reasons. First, the Wilderness Act allowed Congress to create Wilderness, not federal agencies. This is a perfect example of the kind of agency overreach that our President is pushing back against. We have written to President Trump, asking that he examine this Region One unwritten policy. Please encourage the USFS to reconsider this policy/guideline at the regional and national level.

Second, there is no process to release these RWA's back to multiple use management once they are listed as RWA's. Congress should mandate a specific retirement period for all RWA's that are not protected by Congress as Wilderness. Please push for a reasonable retirement period.


Third, Region One of the USFS has not been challenged by bicyclists in court concerning this 10 year old unwritten policy (guideline) until now. The Bitterroot Backcountry Cyclists have joined with motorized groups to challenge this "policy" in the Bitterroot National Forest. A short summary of the current case status from one of the plaintiffs follows.

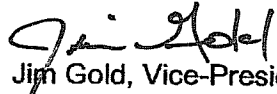
"We filed for summary judgement about two or three weeks ago and as part of that I submitted my declaration to demonstrate I had standing. Presumably the case will appear before the judge sometime in the first half of 2018. For what it is worth the lawyer is more confident about this case than others since the Bitterroot NF was especially flagrant in basing their decision based on Region 1 guidance, going as far as copy and pasting in text from the guidance into the EIS and ROD. This makes it appear that the guidance from Region 1 HQ was not guidance but policy. If so that would be a NEPA violation. If we can establish that the guidance is being used as policy it will hopefully make it harder for the Forest Plan to implement their RW restrictions. The lawyer is especially optimistic about getting the trail closures to bikes reversed at least until the FS redoes a NEPA and closes them again."

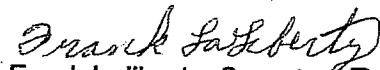
Please stay abreast of this lawsuit and push the USFS to broadly implement any bicycling favorable rulings that may arise from this case.

Finally, the Wilderness groups have far too much sway in Montana's federal land management policies. For example, three of the MWA's 26 paid staffers met with GFBC representatives at the beginning of the HLCNF planning process. John Todd, Casey Perkins, and Mark Good, kindly offered to consider supporting continued bicycling in the Snowys provided we support all of thier other RWA recommendations in the HLCNF and if we would oppose the STC's bill to lift the blanket ban on bicycling in Wilderness areas. "Thanks, but no thanks!" Wilderness advocate's inappropriately powerful influence on USFS decisions is bad for Montana's outdoor economy and the health of our forests.

Thank you for pushing back against Wilderness advocates and their proxies in the USFS. The vast majority of Montanans are for multiple use of our National Forests, not more beetle infested, wildfire prone, expensive to manage, elitists only allowed, effective closures of our public lands.
Sincerely,


John Juras, President
Great Falls Bicycle Club


Jim Gold, Vice-President
Great Falls Bicycle Club


Frank Laliberty, Secretary Treasurer
Great Falls Bicycle Club



PO Box 602 Great Falls, Mt 59403

January 10 2017

TO: Senator Jon Tester
Senator Steve Daines
Representative Ryan Zinke

Dear Sirs:

The Great Falls Trail Bike Riders Association is a not for profit Montana corporation with several hundred members; individuals, family and business members who recreate on the National Forests in Montana. Our members ride motorcycles, ATV's, and ROV's. They hunt, fish, hike, view scenery, pick berries and generally just enjoy the great outdoors. The Lewis & Clark National Forest contains many of the premier motorized trails in the state, mainly because of agency decisions that we feel overlook our sport.

The Wilderness Study Act of 1977 designated 9 areas as Wilderness Study Areas. These areas were long time destinations for motorized recreation and the original bill recognized that, allowing continued motorized use of those areas. Over the following years, the perception from the agency and many groups have diverted the original use of those areas and we find they are no longer open for recreational use as the act provided.

Over the years these areas have not been recommended by the agency for designation, but they have remained in limbo. Currently there is a movement from other recreational user groups requesting the introduction of legislation to have the Wilderness Study designation removed from specific WSA's. While we applaud their effort, the Great Falls Trail Bike Riders Association supports the release of all 9 areas and returning them to management for multiple use.

The Great Falls Trail Bike Riders Association would appreciate any effort introducing legislation to release these areas.

Sincerely,

Ramona Ehnes
Secretart/Treasurer

Received: January 24, 2017

Judith Basin County Commission quote of support:

“The Judith County Commissioners would ask Congress to remove the Wilderness Study Area classification from the Middle Fork of the Judith River in the Little Belt Mountains and have the Forest Service manage the Area as non-wilderness.”

Cody McDonald

Jim Moore

Don Hajenga

Received: February 6, 2018

Montana Association of Counties quote of support:

“We urge Congress to take action on this long-overdue issue and release those lands determined through agency analysis as not suitable for wilderness designation. The studies have been done, the reports have been filed, and recommendations have gone unnoticed for years while a failure to act has crippled the Forest Service’s ability to manage these public lands.”

MACo Public Lands Committee Chairman, Greg Chilcott (Ravalli County Commissioner)



**MONTANA
FARM BUREAU
FEDERATION**

Senator Steve Daines
320 Hart Senate Office Building
120 Constitution Ave NE
Washington, DC 20002

November 6, 2017

Dear Senator Daines,

Public lands are a hot topic on the Federal level these days. Here in Montana we have many different types of public land and the members of the Montana Farm Bureau Federation continue to be interested in the management of these lands. Our members appreciate that there is a renewed focus on the management of federal lands, especially with regard to Wilderness Study Areas. MFBF supports the release of all Wilderness Study Areas (WSA) that have been designated as WSAs for more than five years but have failed to reach wilderness status.

As you know, there are around 40 Wilderness Study Areas in the state of Montana, many of which were designated as such more than forty years ago. Our members feel that five years is more than enough time for the agencies involved to properly "study" the validity of a wilderness designation. If Congress does not find that there is enough evidence supporting a full Wilderness designation after that period of time has elapsed, the land should be released from the "study" and returned to former management practices. Unfortunately, many WSAs have been under this designation for far longer than five years and as it currently stands, they are being managed very similarly to full-on Wilderness Areas, which inhibits the productivity of those lands, harming agriculture and other natural resource industries, as well as the small towns and communities that rely on those industries. Established wilderness criteria threaten multiple use areas by prohibiting the use of motorized tools and mechanized vehicles in watershed management, trail maintenance, noxious weed control, and fire protection, all of which are important to agriculture and have direct effects on adjoining land.

We appreciate you looking into this issue and considering agriculture's concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "HMcPherson".

Hans McPherson
President



Office of the Speaker

MONTANA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

AUSTIN KNUDSEN
SPEAKER

The Honorable Steve Daines
U.S. Senator
320 Hart Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Senator Steve Daines,

We write to you today to request that you and the rest of the Montana delegation introduce legislation similar to House Joint Resolution 9 (HJ 9), which was widely supported, and passed into law, by the Montana State Legislature in April of 2017 during the 65th Montana Legislature.

HJ 9 urges Congress to enact legislation that releases "all wilderness study areas (WSAs) identified and specified in the Montana Wilderness Study Act of 1977....unless Congress confirms a study area for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System." **In the interest of providing certainty to land management agencies and to ensure these public lands are maintained for the multiple benefits they provide the citizens of Montana, the Montana State Legislature widely supports releasing seven WSAs totaling 663,000 acres of National Forest System lands.** Alternatively, Congress should confirm such an area be formally designated as Wilderness or any other alternative designation in a timely fashion.

The WSAs referenced in HJ 9 represent only seven of 44 designated WSAs in Montana. The Montana Wilderness Study Act of 1977 required the Secretary of Agriculture to review specified lands within five years to determine if their suitability warranted inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System, yet Congress has failed to determine the fate of these public lands 40 years later. With Montana's ownership and oversight split evenly between federal, state, and private, additional barriers due to an uncertain future designation only intensifies the complex challenges facing land managers. Congress can and should immediately address these barriers.

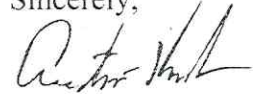
Additionally, HJ 9 states that Congress should "consider re-designating the WSAs as national recreation areas, national protection areas or national conservation areas" should traditional resource development, such as mineral development, timber harvest, or grazing be determined suitable for a particular landscape, making a certain level of protection appropriate. Such a determination simply should have been made in the last 40 years and it was not the intent of Congress to allow lands to sit in limbo without acting on a formal designation. Legislation signed into law that reflects the intent of HJ 9 will remove needless bureaucratic red tape on these lands. Moreover, future management plans resulting from a suitable determination will regulate permitted uses on the landscape as required by current law.

The Montana Legislature recognizes the different uses of our public lands. From resource production to motorized and non-motorized recreation to clean water and wildlife habitat, Montana's public lands provide multiple benefits to the diverse communities they serve.

Ensuring lands that are currently in WSA designation unnecessarily are removed, agencies will engage with the public in determining the future management of these areas, providing more opportunities for diverse use and the many benefits that Montanans expect from their public lands.

Thank you for your consideration of this request and we sincerely hope you will follow the bipartisan actions of the Montana State Legislature and support the conditional release of the Wilderness Study Areas on National Forest System land in Montana.

Sincerely,



Speaker Austin Knudsen

Supporting Members of the Montana House of Representatives:

Rep. Fred Anderson	Rep. Nancy Ballance	Rep. Dan Bartel
Rep. Becky Beard	Rep. Seth Berglee	Rep. Randy Brodehl
Rep. Bob Brown	Rep. Tom Burnett	Rep. Rob Cook
Rep. Mike Cuffe	Rep. Geraldine Custer	Rep. Alan Doane
Rep. Ron Ehli	Rep. Jeff Essmann	Rep. Ross Fitzgerald
Rep. Kelly Flynn	Rep. Wylie Galt	Rep. Frank Garner
Rep. Carl Glimm	Rep. Edward Greef	Rep. Bruce Grubbs
Rep. Steve Gunderson	Rep. Bradley Hamlett	Rep. Bill Harris
Rep. Greg Hertz	Rep. Adam Hertz	Rep. Kenneth Holmlund
Rep. Donald Jones	Rep. Jon Knokey	Rep. Casey Knudsen
Rep. Steve Lavin	Rep. Dennis Lenz	Rep. Denley Loge
Rep. Forrest Mandeville	Rep. Theresa Manzella	Rep. Wendy McKamey
Rep. Dale Mortensen	Rep. Mark Noland	Rep. James O'Hara
Rep. Jimmy Patelis	Rep. Gordon Pierson	Rep. Alan Redfield
Rep. Matt Regier	Rep. Vince Ricci	Rep. Adam Rosendale
Rep. Walt Sales	Rep. Ray Shaw	Rep. Lola Sheldon-Galloway
Rep. Derek Skees	Rep. Scott Staffanson	Rep. Jeremy Trebas
Rep. Brad Tschida	Rep. Barry Usher	Rep. Sue Vinton
Rep. Kirk Wagoner	Rep. Peggy Webb	Rep. Tom Welch
Rep. Kerry White	Rep. Daniel Zolnikov	

Supporting members of the Montana Senate:

Sen. Duane Ankney	Sen. Mark Blasdel	Sen. Dee Brown
Sen. Edward Buttrey	Sen. Pat Connell	Sen. Jennifer Fielder
Sen. Steve Fitzpatrick	Sen. Terry Gauthier	Sen. Steve Hinebaugh
Sen. Jedediah Hinkle	Sen. Brian Hoven	Sen. David Howard
Sen. Llew Jones	Sen. Doug Kary	Sen. Bob Keenan
Sen. Mike Lang	Sen. Eric Moore	Sen. Albert Olszewski
Sen. Ryan Osmundson	Sen. Keith Regier	Sen. Tom Richmond
Sen. Scott Sales	Sen. Daniel Salomon	Sen. Jason Small
Sen. Cary Smith	Sen. Nels Swandal	Sen. Gordon Vance
Sen. Chas Vincent	Sen. Gene Vuckovich	Sen. Roger Webb
Sen. Jeffery Welborn		



Honorable Senator Steve Daines (MT)
320 Hart Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Daines,

February 1, 2018

The Montana Outfitters and Guides Association (MOGA) appreciates your effort to address several Wilderness Study Areas in Montana and supports the Protect Public Use of Public Land Act of 2017.

The Montana Wilderness Study Act passed Congress in 1977 and required the United States Forest Service to study certain landscapes and determine whether those lands were suitable for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The Wilderness Study Areas included in S. 2206, including the Sapphire, West Pioneer, Big Snowies, Middle Fork Judith, and a portion of the Blue Joint were not recommended for inclusion as wilderness and should no longer be subject to the designation. Nearly 40 years later, Congress has not successfully removed these designations, resulting in insufficient planning for forest users and presenting challenges to land managers. Removing this designation will allow for these areas to be revisited within the forest planning process and move us forward toward a lasting resolution that could include everything from designated wilderness to general forest use.

MOGA strongly supports access for all user groups and sound management of our public lands. Ensuring these areas are removed from a management directive that is not compatible with what the Forest Service studies concluded nearly 40 years ago will allow a new process to determine future management of these areas. MOGA would continue to actively participate in forest planning to help influence future land use decisions in these areas to ensure they reflect the diverse interests that Montanans expect from our public land; including motorized, mechanized, and quiet forms of recreation which is critical to the small businesses that constitute most outfitters and guides throughout Montana. Without a predetermined outcome, all user groups will be presented with an opportunity to engage in the planning process, which will ensure proper engagement on behalf of the public and finally move us forward in determining appropriate uses on the ground.

Thank you for continuing to show leadership in reaching consensus on important public lands issues. From having successfully ushered the Rocky Mountain Front Heritage Act through the United States House of Representatives as a Congressman to now tackling long overdue wilderness study areas, Montana Outfitters and Guides Association appreciates your thoughtful approach to difficult public land issues.

Sincerely,

Mac Minard
Montana Outfitters and Guides Association

Montana Outfitters and Guides Association 5 Microwave Hill Road Montana City MT 59634



Montana Shooting Sports Association, Inc.

P.O. Box 4924 • Missoula, Montana 59806 • (406) 549-1252

Website: <http://www.mtssa.org> • email: mssa@mtssa.org

Asserting the Rights of Gun Owners in Montana

OFFICERS

Gary Marbut
President

John R. Mercer
Vice President

Sheridan Buck
Secretary

Tana Stout
Treasurer

DIRECTORS

Sheridan Buck
721-8282
sheridan@mtssa.org

Matt Egloff
782-5704
matt@mtssa.org

Dan Hawkins
443-0139
dan@mtssa.org

Soren Koford
465-1374
soren@mtssa.org

Gary Marbut
549-1252
gary@mtssa.org

John R. Mercer
489-1776
john@mtssa.org

Cary Smith
698-9307
cary@mtssa.org

Keith Van Setten
466-2880
keith@mtssa.org

February 1, 2018

Senator Steve Daines
218 E. Front St., Suite 103
Missoula, Montana 59802


Dear Senator Daines,

The Montana Shooting Sports Association supports S. 2206. We believe that moving the included wilderness study areas back into standard Forest Service management will benefit Montana hunters, but especially hunters who are no longer young and fit but who still wish to hunt.

When we were younger, we could hike in five miles, shoot an elk, and with a struggle, pack it out. Many of us can no longer do that, because of age or infirmity. We are effectively excluded from the hunt because we cannot use motorized methods to get within a mile or so of the hunting opportunity.

These wilderness study areas are classic examples of public lands from which those who are not unusually fit are effectively excluded. We hope that having these areas returned to standard Forest Service management and multiple use will once again allow effective public access for all of the public, and for all hunters.

Sincerely yours,



Gary Marbut
President

Montana Sportsmen for Fish & Wildlife

P.O. Box 2243 <http://www.mt-sfw.org/>
Missoula, MT 59806 sfwmontana@gmail.com



February 4, 2018

RE: The Protect Public Use of Public Lands Act S.2066

Senator Steve Daines
320 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington DC 20510

Dear Senator Daines,

Montana Sportsmen for Fish and Wildlife (MTSFW) is grateful to you for sponsoring legislation (The Protect Public Use of Public Lands Act S.2206), to release wilderness study areas (WSA's) in Montana that have languished in limbo far too long.

As you know MTSFW's primary mission is to preserve hunting, trapping, and fishing rights while protecting Montana's rural heritage. Therefore S.2206 is the perfect public policy change that is central to our purpose and fortifies access for sportsmen.

This legislation brings much needed closure to an issue that should have been decided decades ago, and most importantly allows people with limited capabilities and assets to access our public lands.

S.2066 is crucial to sustain public access and multiple use to our public lands not suitable for wilderness designation and upholding Montana's customs and culture.

Releasing WSA's will help advance forest management projects such as fuel treatments that provide significant advantages for firefighting, enhancing forest health, and providing habitat improvement for wildlife.

We have been deliberating this issue into oblivion even though the evaluation conducted by the United States Forest Service (USFS) determined, in their report to Congress, that none of the Sapphire WSA was suitable for wilderness, and only a portion of the Blue Joint WSA was suitable for wilderness.

We urge you to continue supporting release of wilderness study areas for the benefit of all citizens.

It's time for special interests and anti-multiple use groups to stop imagining more wilderness has been created, where none exists.

JR Strand, President
Montana Sportsmen for Fish and Wildlife



U.S. Senator Steve Daines
Hart Senate Office Building 220,
Washington, D.C 20510

Re: Support for the Protect Public Use of Public Lands Act

Dear Senator Steve Daines,

The Montana Wilderness Study Act of 1977 required the Forest Service to study the suitability of 973,000 acres of National Forest System Lands in Montana and determine if they could meet the criteria for Wilderness designation. The Study was to last five years. Thirty-five later, the majority of acres remain in the Wilderness Study Area designation and many public land users have lost and continue to lose access to places where they and their families have recreated for generations. Additionally, the majority of these acres have been studied and determined to **not** meet the criteria for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

Removing this designation from areas that the Forest Service deemed not suitable for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System will allow Montanans and the American public the opportunity to finally determine what uses are appropriate through the public planning processes.

Our organizations have requested action on WSAs for many years. Unfortunately, inaccurate information and pervasive rhetoric have prevented an honest conversation about releasing areas not recommended for wilderness areas by the US Forest Service.

Our organizations strongly support the Protect Public Use of Public Lands Act because all recreationists – including motorized, the disabled, the elderly, and more – should have the opportunity to engage in recreational activity on public land in areas that are deemed suitable for uses of their choice, through public processes, without the complication that Wilderness Study Areas present to land managers and the public at large. This act provides an opportunity for more public dialog about the use of these public lands and will allow everyone in the public to participate in the planning processes to determine which uses are suitable for a particular landscape.

Thank you for introducing legislation to remove the outdated 1977 Montana Wilderness Study Area designation from these five areas.

With Sincere gratitude,
Montana Trail Vehicle Riders Association, representing the attached list of member clubs.

Creating a positive future for off-highway vehicle recreation

Montana Trail Vehicle Riders Association,
Mike Jeffords, President
Russ Ehnes, Vice President
Ramona Ehnes, Secretary/Treasurer
William R. Black, Director at Large
Doug Abelin, Director at Large & President of Capital Trail Vehicle Assn
Nic Richardson, Director at Large

5 Rivers Trail Riders, Bozeman. Director/President Rich Winget
Billings Motorcycle Club, Billings. Director Charles D. Bonnett
Bitterroot Ridge Riders, Hamilton. Director Dan Thompson
Blackfoot Valley OHV Assn, Lincoln. Director Frank Malek
Cabinet Ridge Riders. Trout Creek. Director Jim Morkert
Capital Trail Vehicle Assn, Helena. Director Mike Sedlock
Gallatin Valley Dirt Riders, Bozeman. Director Jeff Holman
Great Falls Trail Bike Riders Assn, Great Falls. Director Mark Klemencic
Mining City Trail Riders, Butte. Director Benny Finnicum
Ranch Riders, Glendive. Director Marty Ulrich
Ravalli County Off Road Users Assn, Hamilton. Director Brent Nelson
Seeley-Swan ATV Club Inc., Seeley Lake. Director Dave Sharbano
Treasure State ATV Assn, Billings. Director Bruce Butler
Western Montana Trail Riders Assn, Missoula. Director Roger Tulbert

Creating a positive future for off-highway vehicle recreation

Received: December, 13 2017

Montana Wool Growers Association quote of support:

“The Montana Wool Growers Association lends its support to the Protect Public Use of Lands Act and thanks Montana Senator Steve Daines for his strong leadership on the same. This important bill is unique because it seeks to promote the use of public lands, as opposed to closing them off to public use – the latter being a trend all-too-often seen in recent years.

Montana’s sheep industry has experienced first-hand and all too well the loss of public lands for multiple use, such as for grazing purposes, and the exploding growth of litigation resulting from Congress’ 40 years of inaction on the Montana Wilderness Study Act of 1977.

As a result of the failure of Congress to act on public lands locked up by the Wilderness Study Act, for the last four decades, public lands in Montana have been treated like and have become de facto wilderness areas. This situation has resulted in the public being effectively blocked from using public lands that would otherwise be placed under the management directive of the U.S. Forest Service. It has also resulted in economic harm to the communities and industries that economically benefit from multiple use of public lands, such as the agriculture industry.

MWGA commends Senator Daines for affirmatively acting on the directive of the Montana Legislature by introducing federal legislation to bring these lands out of legal limbo and releasing the WSAs in accordance with the recommendations made long ago by the Forest Service to do so. Montana’s sheep industry supported HJ 9 during the 2017 Montana legislative session because this agriculture industry knows it is well past time for Congress to complete the work that Congress was supposed to complete as far back as 1982.”

Kevin Halverson, President, MWGA, Big Timber



A JOINT RESOLUTION OF THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA URGING THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS TO RELEASE CERTAIN WILDERNESS STUDY AREAS IN MONTANA FROM CONSIDERATION FOR INCLUSION IN THE NATIONAL WILDERNESS PRESERVATION SYSTEM.

WHEREAS, the 95th Congress passed the Montana Wilderness Study Act of 1977; and

WHEREAS, the Montana Wilderness Study Act required the Secretary of Agriculture to review certain lands within 5 years to determine suitability for preservation as wilderness and report the findings to the President; and

WHEREAS, almost 663,000 acres of land in Montana are designated under the Montana Wilderness Study Act, including the:

- (1) West Pioneer Wilderness Study Area comprising approximately 151,000 acres;
- (2) Blue Joint Wilderness Study Area comprising approximately 61,000 acres;
- (3) Sapphire Wilderness Study Area comprising approximately 94,000 acres;
- (4) Ten Lakes Wilderness Study Area comprising approximately 34,000 acres;
- (5) Middle Fork Judith Wilderness Study Area comprising approximately 81,000 acres;
- (6) Big Snowies Wilderness Study Area comprising approximately 91,000 acres; and
- (7) Hyalite-Porcupine-Buffalo Horn Wilderness Study Area comprising approximately 151,000 acres; and

WHEREAS, the 5-year period for review mandated by the Montana Wilderness Study Act expired in 1982; and

WHEREAS, the vast majority of Montana lands identified in the Montana Wilderness Study Act have never been formally recommended by the Secretary of Agriculture for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System and no law has been signed by the President to designate these lands as wilderness; and

WHEREAS, these Montana lands are in legal limbo, a situation that causes extensive federal litigation as to what uses of the lands are appropriate and, in turn, places a burden on federal court resources; and

WHEREAS, uncertainty and wide swings in Executive Branch philosophy regarding the administration

of these lands are costing the public millions of dollars as forest assets burn and deteriorate and as investments in forest road construction and improvements are being deliberately destroyed; and

WHEREAS, administrative decisions and preservationist lawsuits have progressively reduced access to public lands for forest managers and the public; and

WHEREAS, the long-term sustainability of public lands depends on good stewardship and professional scientific site-specific management of forest resources; and

WHEREAS, Montana's historic heritage, customs, and culture are linked to the proper stewardship and use of the state's natural resources; and

WHEREAS, these lands are defacto wilderness in lieu of congressional action, a situation that has resulted in a waste of forest assets, no management of public forests, and a harmful reduction in forest road construction and multiple-use access improvements; and

WHEREAS, the failure by Congress to release the lands locked up by the Montana Wilderness Study Act of 1977 severely harms agriculture, timber harvesting, and multiple-use interests, as well as Montana communities and Montana families economically supported by those activities; and

WHEREAS, it is the consensus of the Montana Legislature that more than sufficient time has passed for the study of these lands as to their suitability for preservation as wilderness to be completed under the Montana Wilderness Study Act; and

WHEREAS, national forest lands released from wilderness study would still be subject to the National Forest Management Act, which requires extensive public involvement as the agency develops and updates plans for the management and use of resources in each forest; and

WHEREAS, the Montana Legislature on behalf of the citizens of the state assert that the time is ripe for final disposition of these lands.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

That the Legislature supports scientific adaptive management to implement the multiple-use concept of public land use as mandated by the Multiple-Use Sustained Yield Act of 1960, to ensure the protection and improvement of forest health, and to maintain and improve the sustainability of federal forests located in Montana.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the United States Congress enact legislation to release all wilderness study areas identified and specified in the Montana Wilderness Study Act of 1977 in order to secure the rights of Montana citizens to use these public lands for public purposes, including for purposes of multiple recreation

use, unless Congress confirms a study area for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Congress:

(1) release all wilderness study areas and implement the concept of multiple use in order to fulfill the federal mandate as required by the Forest Management Act of 1897 to manage the national forests to "improve and protect the forest within the reservation, or for the purpose of securing favorable conditions of water flows, and to furnish a continuous supply of timber for the use and necessities of citizens of the United States"; or

(2) consider redesignating the wilderness study areas as national recreation areas or national conservation areas.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that in its deliberations, Congress consider the land management alternatives in view of the Forest Management Act of 1897 in conjunction with the 2007 water compact between the state of Montana and the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service since land management directly impacts the volume, quantity, and timing of water flows from watersheds in these wilderness study areas and impacts downstream water rights holders.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Legislature urges the Secretary of the Department of Agriculture to direct the Forest Service to immediately evaluate the impacts of the land management alternatives on the watersheds in the wilderness study areas and downstream water rights holders to help inform Congress in its deliberations.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that copies of this resolution be sent to the Governor of Montana, the Montana Congressional Delegation, the United States Secretary of the Interior, the United States Secretary of Agriculture, and the Chief of the United States Forest Service.

- END -

I hereby certify that the within joint resolution,
HJ 0009, originated in the House.

Speaker of the House

Signed this _____ day
of _____, 2017.

Chief Clerk of the House

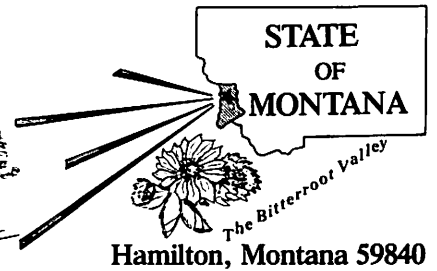
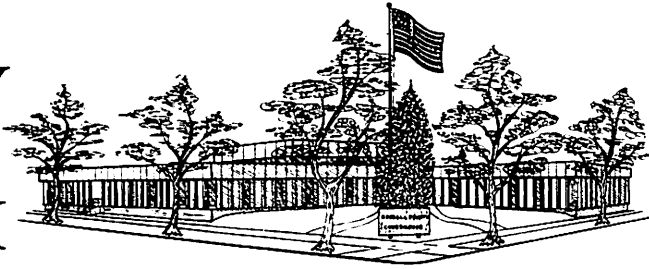
President of the Senate

Signed this _____ day
of _____, 2017.

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 9
INTRODUCED BY K. WHITE, C. VINCENT

A JOINT RESOLUTION OF THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA URGING THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS TO RELEASE CERTAIN WILDERNESS STUDY AREAS IN MONTANA FROM CONSIDERATION FOR INCLUSION IN THE NATIONAL WILDERNESS PRESERVATION SYSTEM.

COUNTY OF RAVALLI



Hamilton, Montana 59840

September 15, 2017

Senator Steve Daines
320 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Daines,

Ravalli County strongly supports legislation to finally address WSAs (Wilderness Study Areas). Ravalli County has been asking Congress and the Department of Agriculture to address this critical land use issue for years. The WSAs in Ravalli County have been studied by the Forest Service and we agree with, and support, their 1987 recommendation to release the Sapphire WSA. The Blue Joint WSA is 64,168 acres with 27,501 acres recommended for Wilderness in the 1987 Bitterroot Forest Plan (BFP). The Commission strongly opposes Wilderness designation of any of the Blue Joint WSA.

The Bitterroot National Forest (BNF) currently has 750,211 acres designated as Wilderness Area and two (2) Wilderness Study Areas (WSA) with a combined acreage of 101,974 acres. Additionally, there are 48,864 acres designated as Recommended Wilderness Areas (RWA). A number of the fractured Bitterroot RWA acres are adjacent

to private property and the Wildland-Urban Interface with the remainder attached to, and expanding, designated Wilderness Areas and, in the opinion of the Commissioners, do not possess significant wilderness characteristics. We believe that there are NO public lands, which are not currently designated as Wilderness Area, that have STRONG LOCAL SUPPORT for designation as Wilderness Area in Ravalli County. The overwhelming majority of Ravalli County citizens involved with agriculture, timber, mining, communication, motorized recreation and general outdoor recreation that live, work and recreate in our county support a reduction of public lands managed as Wilderness Area and increasing public lands managed for multiple-use.


When reviewing lands within Ravalli County being studied/considered for Wilderness Area designation, of paramount importance to our residents are the Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs). The analysis performed by the Bitterroot National Forest in 1987 found 74,473 acres of the 101,974 acres of WSA was "Not Recommended for Wilderness." These areas are still Wilderness Study Areas, not because they have outstanding wilderness characteristics, but because Congress has not acted to remove the WSA designation it imposed 40 years ago.

As the budget problems persist in Washington, D.C., Ravalli County Commissioners would like to stress the importance of federal revenue sharing that comes from the active management of federal lands. Recognizing and utilizing the economic potential of responsible resource utilization on public lands would greatly benefit our nation beginning with our local economy, extending to the many visitors who travel to Ravalli

County to recreate on these public lands and support federal agencies' budgets from permits, income, and fees.

Ravalli County is surrounded by millions of acres of Wilderness Area and National Parks that are located within a day's drive. These Wilderness Areas are, in many cases, the origin of catastrophic forest fires that burn tens of thousands of acres of National Forest, State Forest and private property every year. The Ravalli County Commissioners strongly support and encourage federal policy reform that requires active forest management rather than the current model that results in catastrophic fires, loss of life and property, economic impacts, loss of wildlife habitat and significant impacts to our citizen's health and safety from hazardous air quality. The Commissioners also strongly encourage Congress to release all WSAs and RWAs in Ravalli County from a Wilderness Area designation.

Sincerely,



Greg Chilcott, Chairman

Ray Hawk, Member

Chris Hoffman, Member

Jeff Burrows, Member

ABSENT

Doug Schallenberger, Member

Ravalli County Off Road User Association

*P.O. Box 72, Hamilton, Montana 59840
www.ravallioffroad.org*

September 12, 2016

Senator Jon Tester
Senator Steve Daines
Representative Ryan Zinke

The Ravalli County Off Road User Association (RCORUA) is a group of about 400 citizens who advocate for public access to public land. Many of our members enjoy opportunities for motorized recreation, hunting, and fishing in the Helena-Lewis & Clark National Forest.

This letter enthusiastically supports the request from the Russell County Sportsmen's Association for Congressional legislation that would release certain WSAs in the Helena-Lewis & Clark NF that do not meet the criteria for designation as Wilderness Areas. We concur that the recent tendency, influenced by wealthy and litigious out-of-state environmental groups, to create defacto wilderness in areas of public land that do not meet the criteria for wilderness needs to be corrected by Congress. In our view, the current tendency of Federal land management agencies to create wilderness where wilderness does not exist and without designation from Congress is an unacceptable symptom of Federal overreach and it is in fact the duty of Congress to reign in these rogue agencies with legislative action.

There are other Forests and BLM areas in Montana that are similarly threatened by inappropriate designations of defacto wilderness. For example the Bitterroot National Forest (BNF) contains portions of two WSAs designated by the 1977 Montana WSA Act. The Sapphire WSA is 117,000 acres and straddles the boarder between the Bitterroot and Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forests. The Blue Joint WSA is 65,860 acres and a small portion of this WSA lies in the Salmon-Challis National Forest. In their joint 1985 recommendation to Congress, these Forests concluded that none of the Sapphire WSA and about half of the Blue Joint WSA were inadequate candidates for wilderness designation. Disregarding these professional and thorough evaluations, the recent BNF Travel Plan arbitrarily closes those portions of the Sapphire and Blue Joint WSAs that lie within the boundary of the BNF to all motorized and mechanized (mountain bikes) travel. Those portions of the Sapphire and Blue Joint WSAs within the B-D and S-C National Forests will be managed for multiple uses, including motorized and mechanized travel.

The fact that most Montana citizens pursue their recreational interests outside Designated or defacto Wilderness areas is inescapable. Some forests such as the Bitterroot and Flathead Forests are already 50% Designated Wilderness but their wilderness visitation rates are 4% and 2% respectively. In Region 1, fewer than 4% of all forest visitors choose to access Wilderness Areas. Creating more defacto wilderness areas through the Forest Planning or Travel Planning processes crowds the overwhelming majority of citizens into increasingly

smaller and smaller areas. This concentration of uses has serious adverse consequences to our forest resources and wildlife and discourages citizens from pursuing healthy outdoor activities. Recreational activities on non-wilderness Federal lands provides hundreds of millions of dollars every year to local economies. Discouraging access to these lands will exacerbate the loss of income and jobs that Montana so desperately needs.

We whole-heartedly agree with the Russell County Sportsmen's Association that those portions of Montana's WSA which do not meet the requirements for wilderness should be released for multiple use. We hope that you will do so with a sense of urgency.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Lisa Jessop".

Lisa Jessop, President
Ravalli County Off Road User Association

Cc Russell County Sportsmen's Association



MONTANA STATE SENATE

SENATOR ERIC MOORE

SENATE DISTRICT 19

HELENA ADDRESS:
STATE CAPITOL
PO BOX 200500
HELENA, MT 59620-0500
(406) 444-4800

HOME ADDRESS:
487 SIGNAL BUTTE ROAD
MILES CITY, MT 59301
PHONE: (406) 234-3562

COMMITTEES:
FINANCE & CLAIMS
AGRICULTURE, LIVESTOCK & IRRIGATION
RULES
AUDIT

The Honorable Senator Steve Daines
320 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

September 25, 2017

Dear Senator Daines,

I am writing to express my appreciation for your work on reviewing certain Wilderness Study Areas for possible removal in accordance with HJ 9, passed by the 2017 Montana Legislature.

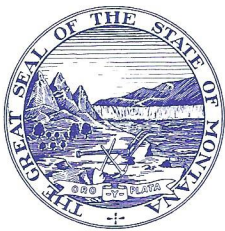
I would encourage you, during your deliberations, to give full consideration to WSAs in the eastern part of the state as well. As you are aware, the devastating Lodgepole complex fire started on a WSA. The rules preventing firefighters from promptly dealing with the blaze are to a certain degree responsible for the fire getting out of control and causing the destruction it did. Public lands under different classifications are more open to the public, provide better economic returns to the local community, and contribute less to Montana's wildfire hazard.

Thank you for your service to Montana and the nation, please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Fred Moore".

Frederick D. Moore
Montana Senate District 19



The Big Sky Country

MONTANA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

REPRESENTATIVE NANCY BALLANCE
HOUSE DISTRICT 87

HELENA ADDRESS:
CAPITOL BUILDING
PO BOX 200400
HELENA, MONTANA 59620-0400
PHONE: (406) 444-4800

COMMITTEES:
APPROPRIATIONS

HOME ADDRESS:
PO BOX 314
HAMILTON, MT 59840
PHONE: (406) 363-8416
EMAIL: nancyballance@aol.com

January 2, 2018

Senator Steve Daines
320 Hart Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20510

Senator Jon Tester
311 Hart Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20510-2604

Cong. Greg Gianforte
1419 Longworth HOB
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Senator Daines, Senator Tester, and Congressman Gianforte:

During the 2017 session of the Montana Legislature, we passed widely supported legislation to release Wilderness Study Areas (WSA) in Montana. Unless Congress can confirm that a study area should be included in the National Wilderness Preservation System, we requested that it be released.

We also asked that if Congress finds that an area should be designated as Wilderness, or any other alternative designation, that they make this determination in a timely fashion. What should have been a five-year review process has turned into more than 35 years of denying access to hundreds of thousands of acres of public land in Montana while it awaits ultimate designation.

Our message to Congress was that it's time to fish or cut bait...a little less conversation, a lot more action...get moving. Until Congress takes action, WSAs are managed by government agencies as if they were already Wilderness Areas with most public access cut off completely or heavily restricted.

I would like to thank Senator Steve Daines for taking up this issue with his legislation to release five (out of 44) WSAs in Montana. Releasing these areas will provide certainty to land management agencies and will ensure that these public lands are maintained for the multiple benefits they provide the public.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Nancy Ballance".

Representative Nancy Ballance, House District 87, Hamilton



The Big Sky Country

MONTANA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

REPRESENTATIVE THERESA MANZELLA
HOUSE DISTRICT 85

HELENA ADDRESS:
CAPITOL BUILDING
PO BOX 200400
HELENA, MONTANA 59620-0400
PHONE: (406) 444-4800

COMMITTEES:
JUDICIARY
AGRICULTURE
NATURAL RESOURCES

HOME ADDRESS:
640 GOLD CREEK LOOP
HAMILTON, MT 59840
PHONE: (406) 546-9462
EMAIL: Rep.Theresa.Manzella.MT.GOV

1/30/18

I want to publicly and sincerely thank Senator Steve Daines for addressing Wilderness Study Areas in Montana that are not recommended for wilderness designation. The Protect Public Use of Public Land Act (text found here- <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/senate-bill/2206/text>) is honoring the desires of the 65th Montana Legislature through the passage of our HJ9, which requested a decision from Congress on 7 Wilderness Study Areas. It's encouraging to have one of our Senators working in harmony with the state legislature to support the will of Montanans that support removing restrictions on lands not deemed suitable for Wilderness protections.

Congress passed the Montana Wilderness Study Act in 1977 which required the Secretary of Agriculture to review over 950k acres of land within 5 years to determine suitability for preservation as wilderness and report the findings to the President.

That was 40 years ago. We're now 35 years overdue, and still waiting for a final decision from Congress.

Currently, these lands are in legal limbo, the focus of many lawsuits and susceptible to restrictions that reduce a majority of users from accessing public land. This directive by perpetuity in areas not suitable for wilderness has resulted in a waste of forest assets, poor public planning, and a harmful reduction in forest road construction and multiple-use access improvements. The long-term sustainability of public lands depends on good stewardship and professional scientific site-specific management of forest resources. Montana's historic heritage, customs, and culture are linked to the proper stewardship and use of the state's natural resources.

The failure of Congress to remove designations in non suitable areas as determined by the Montana Wilderness Study Act of 1977 severely harms multiple-use interests and other forest users as well as Montana communities and Montana families economically supported by those activities. National forest lands released from wilderness study would still be subject to the National Forest Management Act, which requires extensive public involvement as the Forest Service agency develops and updates plans for the management and use of resources in each forest. Senator Daines bill would be a big and long overdue step in the right direction toward correction, and I urge your support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rep Theresa Manzella".

Rep Theresa Manzella
HD 85

Russell Country Sportsmen's Association



P.O. Box 282 • Great Falls, Montana 59403

September 20, 2016

TO: Senator Jon Tester
Senator Steve Daines
Representative Ryan Zinke

The members of Russell Country Sportsmen's Association respectfully ask you to introduce legislation to support the removal of the "Wilderness Study Area" (WSA) designation from the North Fork of the Judith River in the Little Belt Mountains and in the Big Snowy Mountains.

These areas were first identified as WSA's during the Roadless Area Review and Evaluation (RARE1) process in 1972 and in the Montana Wilderness Study Act of 1977. Formal Congressional designation as wilderness areas has never taken place. In fact, in every document since the designation, the Forest Service has time and again recommended it for non-wilderness management. For instance, their 1982 Final Environmental Statement (FES) published for the Montana Wilderness Study Act did **not** recommend either WSA as a candidate for wilderness designation. And in 1986, their Forest Plan Record of Decision for the Lewis & Clark National Forest recommended "*nonwilderness for both areas*".

Even though the research and science support non-wilderness for these areas, Congressional action is needed to remove these WSA designations.

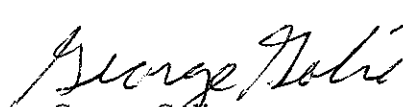


For instance in the Middle Fork, having a WSA in the middle of a national forest that contains private inholdings and has a history of multiple-use, does not provide a wilderness experience and creates a patchwork of federal/private/wilderness land management.

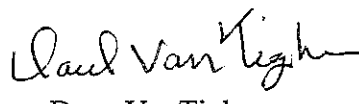
The Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest is currently undergoing a mandated forest planning process. Fixing this long delayed action by Congress will assist the Forest Service in this endeavor.

The Montana Wilderness Association and the Wilderness Society are actively pursuing the expansion of wilderness on our public lands. We believe the current inventory of wilderness on public land is sufficient for the needs of wilderness-oriented recreation in Montana. Continuing the WSA designation will have a huge impact on many outdoor groups, especially the handicapped and elderly in America and is contrary to the Congressional mandate for multiple-use of our forests.

In conclusion, these two areas are clearly not suited for wilderness designation and their status as a study area should be rescinded. Please introduce legislation that will do this at the earliest opportunity. We look forward to your response.

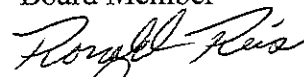
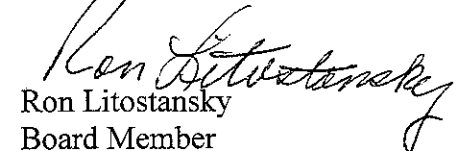
Thank You for Your Service to Montana,

		
George Golie	Mike Babcock	Steve Sem
Vice President	Vice President	Vice President

		
John Borgreen	Dave VanTighem	Ronald Reis
Secretary/Treasurer	Board Member	Board Member


Charles Marlen ^{by} TB
Board Member


Jerry Borgreen
Board Member



Ron Litostansky
Board Member

Montana State Senate



The Treasure State

SENATOR PATRICK "PAT" CONNELL
SENATE DISTRICT 43

HELENA ADDRESS:
PO BOX 200500
HELENA MT 59620-0500
PHONE: (406) 444-4800

HOME ADDRESS:
567 TIFFANY LN
HAMILTON MT 59840
PHONE: (406) 370-8682
EMAIL: Sen.Pat.Connell@mt.gov

COMMITTEES:
BUSINESS, LABOR, AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS
NATURAL RESOURCES
ENERGY AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS - VICE CHAIR
LEGISLATIVE ADMINISTRATION - VICE CHAIR

1 February 2018

Senator Steve Daines
320 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington DC 20510

Re: Senate Bill S2066

Dear Senator Daines:

I write to express my endorsement of your bill which will remove the "Wilderness Study Area" designation on 5 areas in Montana, with acknowledgement that two such areas, the Blue Joint and Sapphire areas comprise over 125,000 acres and are within my State Senate district.

The polemic "zero sum game" arguments that seems to be used by those opposing the lifting of the "Study Area" designation are deeply troubling to me. This bill does not "remove protection" from these lands, nor does it lead to a "sell off" of public lands. Rather, S 2066 is a thoughtful attempt to return these lands from a stasis that does not recognize the natural changing conditions within which we live and the risks our society faces..

These areas within your bill constitute headwater regions of Montana. They are, then, a good part of the source of Montana's most important asset: Water. We have come from the decade of the 70s when in fact, a looming "Ice Age" was anticipated until now, when climate change bespeaks of drier and hotter climates. Experts, including the Montana Climate Institute are predicting serious changes over the next 3 to 5 decades; chief amongst them is a shortage of late summer season water flows.

Backed both by empirical and analytical science, longer, hotter and drier summers ahead for Montana will cause severe risks for our agricultural and recreational economies. Over the past few years, between weather extremes, limited access, limited resources and a voluminous fuel loading, Montana's watersheds have been methodically burnt. The direct result has been earlier spring runoffs, and less late season water for irrigation, fishing or rafting.

Since the Organic Act of 1897, and reaffirmed by the Supreme Court in *U.S. v New Mexico* in 1978, supplying water to downstream Senior Water Right holders is a primary responsibility of the National Forests. Its emphasis is even further elevated with the Forest Service entering into a Water Compact with Montana in 2007.

The various National Forests in Montana are either benignly neglecting, or actually avoiding management planning on these WSA, and as a consequence effectively ignoring their importance as a watershed's "hydrologic sponge" that an established, green and growing forest can provide for late season water release downstream. Dead standing forests, and fully burnt watersheds do not.

High, subalpine remote areas like these WSAs don't usually burn very often, or at high intensity, until weather or future climate changes magnifies the risks.

Montana watched this past summer's horrible wildfire season as the Forest Service concentrated its fire-fighting assets near Forests' boundaries, rather than to suppress fires in headwater drainages – in large part due to limited or no mechanical access along with some severe dead and down fuel loading. S 2066 will be a necessary first step to initiate the analytical effort for Forests in Montana to evaluate site specific accessibility, fuel conditions, and watershed importance for offsetting the predicted climate change we face.

Sincerely,



Senator Pat Connell, *Certified Forester*
Chair, MT Water Policy Committee



SWMMBA Statement in Support of S.2206
Protect Public Use of Public Lands Act

The Southwest Montana Mountain Bike Association ("SWMMBA") supports the Protect our Public Lands Act (S.2206), introduced by Senator Steve Daines in December of 2017. SWMMBA is committed to both preserving and enhancing mountain bike access on our treasured public lands. S.2206 will release hundreds of thousands of acres of land in Montana encompassed in Wilderness Study Areas ("WSA") since 1977. The legislation which created these WSAs intended for a five (5) year window to determine the suitability for Wilderness status. To date, Congress has failed to take action as to a majority of that land. The result is that much of it is being managed as *de facto* Wilderness (and thereby prohibiting bicycle travel), despite the fact that Congress has never designated the land as Wilderness. S.2206 will immediately open this land to preexisting public uses, with much of the land designated as "inventoried roadless area," a designation which allows mountain bikes. Despite some public protestations to the contrary, the land will remain public, and very wild in feel.

For mountain bikers this Bill is important not only because it will lift the prohibition on mechanized travel in many of Montana's WSAs, but also because it will subject this land to visible and open Forest Service Planning and Travel Management processes. Those future processes will take place in the public forum with input from all local user and interest groups, including mountain bikers. SWMMBA and other like-minded groups will have an opportunity to advocate for appropriate mountain bike access. SWMMBA's recent participation in the Gallatin Forest Partnership, with a resulting agreed proposal recently submitted to the Forest Service, convinces SWMMBA that diverse interests can collaborate in the forest planning and management process. It is SWMMBA's hope that such collaboration will lead to great results not just for mountain bikers, but for all forest users and advocates.

The WSAs of Montana have remained in legal limbo for far too long. After nearly 40 years these lands deserve to be released from what was only intended to be a temporary WSA process.

On Behalf of SWMMBA's Board of Directors:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ian Jones".

Ian Jones
President



OFFICERS

Randy Stemple
President

Lee Swartz
1st Vice President

Brad Stemple
2nd Vice President

Gary Marbut
Secretary

James M. McDonald
Treasurer

Carol Smith
Membership Chair
218-8603

DIRECTORS

TERM EXPIRES 12/31/2018

Eric Smart
360-3361
eric@wmfga.org

James M. McDonald
370-2500
jim@wmfga.org

Randy Stemple
370-0804
randy@wmfga.org

Gary Ritter
721-9510
garyr@wmfga.org

TERM EXPIRES 12/31/2019

Scott Bair
721-7211
scott@wmfga.org

Lynnette Sims
880-9852
lynnette@wmfga.org

John Gross
542-2006
john@wmfga.org

Gary Marbut
549-1252
gary@wmfga.org

Patrick Jensen
728-7985
patrick@wmfga.org

TERM EXPIRES 12/31/2020

Mike Chandler
549-7639
mike@wmfga.org

Paul Miner
721-7214
paul@wmfga.org

Brad Stemple
370-0803
brad@wmfga.org

Lee Swartz
273-2236
lee@wmfga.org

Western Montana Fish and Game Association, Inc.

P.O. Box 4294 • Missoula, MT 59806 • www.wmfga.org

*A Foundation for Montana's Hunting and Fishing Heritage
and 2nd Amendment Rights*

February 2, 2018

Senator Steve Daines
218 E. Front St., Suite 103
Missoula, Montana 59802

Dear Senator Daines,

The Western Montana Fish and Game Association (WMFGA) is Montana's oldest (founded in 1911) regional organization of sportsmen and women. Although we care about environmental values, our 3,000+ members are not environmentalists primarily, while attempting to disguise themselves as "sportsmen" for political effect. Rather, our members are dedicated gun owners and hunters.

The WMFGA supports S. 2206. We believe that Montana has enough wilderness, and that the public lands affected by S. 2206 need to be finally released from wilderness study areas into general Forest Service management for multiple use. We believe the public interest, the Montana economy, and good land stewardship would be best served by this release.

Thank you for your efforts with S. 2206.

Sincerely yours,

Randy Stemple
President